friends, and renews old acquaintanceships. It was so very nice to see Mrs. and Miss Firth again, and brought back most vividly the memory of Saturday afternoons spent in their lovely house and garden. Mrs. Franklin was most kind and one felt she was doing so much towards the success of the evening. It is needless to say how terribly Miss Mason was missed, and I think we all felt it was a little hard that she, who is the originator of it all, should not be there to see the success of her work.

I was glad I had thoroughly examined all the exhibits at the Natural History Exhibition in the afternoon, as the crowd was much too great in the evening to see anything of them, and some were well worth seeing, especially the Nature Note-books.

I only wish all the students could have been there; it is so inspiring to be brought into touch with the wider life of the Union.

J. M. Baird.

A NATURAL-HISTORY AFTERNOON AT THE CONFERENCE.

Not the least attractive of the many delights offered to us at the Conference was the Exhibition of the Natural History Club and a charming lecture by the Rev. Theodore Wood, son of the great naturalist. For the sake of the many of our fellow-students who had not the pleasure of hearing the lecture, I am sending the following outline of it, although it can be but a poor substitute for the original, which, besides being illustrated by excellent blackboard diagrams, was given with a quiet humour which made it additionally enjoyable.

Having introduced his subject by narrating the (to us) well-known story of the walk taken by "Eyes and No-Eyes," the lecturer told us that what we manage to see when out on a country walk is largely a matter of habit. We may train our observing faculties until we notice almost as a matter of

course even so small a thing as a beetle no larger than a pin's head. If we would see much of Nature we must learn to *keep still* at times, lying or sitting without even so much as winking an eye, for there is nothing that so alarms wild creatures as motion.

One of the specimens we may often see in the country is a *Squirrel*—and we should notice three points in his structure, viz., his teeth, toes, and tail. Being one of the rodents, his teeth are arranged like nippers, and, however much work they do, they never wear away, because they are always growing. Neither do they become blunt, being composed of two substances like a carpenter's chisel—a softer kind cased in front by a very hard enamel. His toes, too, are not made for climbing but for jumping, and if you closely watch a squirrel you will see he does not *run* up a tree, but goes by a series of jumps. To aid him in this his joints are peculiarly arranged so that he can tuck them well against his body as a boy does his elbows in climbing a ladder. Then, too, if he falls from a great height, which rarely happens to a sure-footed squirrel, he takes no harm, for his skin is made so loosely that it acts like a parachute, while by means of his beautiful tail, which is to him what a balancing pole is to a tight-rope walker, he can preserve his balance in a marvellous way on narrow branches.

Then, again, we may sometimes come across a *Weasel*. The shortness of his legs is to be noted—miserable-looking specimens as they are compared with those of other creatures, but admirably adapted for helping him in creeping into burrows to find his prey. The spines of a *Hedgehog* are wonderfully arranged, being fastened beneath the skin to a strong, flexible muscle, by working which they can be lowered or raised at pleasure. He will require a whole jam-pot full of snails or worms per day if full-grown. The farmers will often kill the hedgehogs, thinking that because he is so fond of going near the cows when they are lying down, he does so to get their milk—but this is all a mistake. Mr. H. knows that when a heavy weight, such as a cow's body, is pressing down on the ground, the worms come up to see what is the matter, and he can, consequently, have a hearty meal!

The lecturer gave some very interesting notes on the *Kestrel* and the *Barn-Owl*, which latter does by night what

the kestrel does by day. The kestrel can see its prey when two hundred or three hundred feet below it, and though we always feel pity for the creatures it destroys, it is comforting to know that they can feel no pain. For ten months out of the twelve the kestrel is busy, and *one* will destroy, on an average, 10,000 mice annually! We were then told about the *Thrush's* proclivity for snails, and about the lecturer having noted in one garden several large stones each surrounded by broken snail shells. Each thrush will have its own particular stone to which it carries all its snails, there to break the shell, first on one side and then on the other, until it can conveniently extract the snail. Of all birds the *Robin* is the greediest, and a robin weighing only one ounce will eat comfortably two and a half ounces of food in a day, or fourteen feet of earthworms! Here the lecturer worked out an amusing little sum, by which he proved that had a man weighing fourteen stones an appetite proportionate to a robin's he would require two thousand five hundred and twenty sausages a day! Surely, knowing this, we can no longer tell our delicate friend that she has "only the appetite of a bird." Other interesting facts were given us about the *Cuckoo* (which one small boy had defined as "a bird that does not lay its own eggs!") and of several kinds of beetles, the blackboard illustrations all through the lecture being admirable.

Among the exhibits arranged round the room, some of the most noticeable were the excellent Brushwork designs done by children of twelve to fourteen years in the London School-Board. Knowing little about designs myself, I could not attempt to criticise, but the colouring and correctness of form, as well as the originality of the work, made one long to be able to do it as well onesself. I noticed among the collections a very good one of different kinds of wood, but what struck me most was the admirable Brushwork studies of twigs sent in by Gladys Clark-Kennedy (13). The work was not only vigorous in colour and touch, but the specimens were well-chosen and arranged, and the distinctive forms had been very carefully depicted, and some of the paintings showed the different stages of the buds. The specimens chosen were: Ash, Mountain Ash or Rowan, Acacia, Wych Elm, Lime, Balsam Poplar, Lombardy Poplar, Oriental Plane, Oak, Aspen Poplar, Walnut, Sycamore, Horse Chestnut, and Beech. There was a collection of (deserted) birds' nests, and

various others of dried and mounted flowers. Mrs. Anson had sent in a set of most beautifully painted wild-flowers (done on white, and mounted on grey paper), and she told me that these were taken from some four hundred others which she has done. I did not note much effort in the way of Geology, but there was one very nice collection sent by E. and C. Brooks, of Crawshaw Hall, Rawtenstall. There were contingents of Nature Diaries, Sloyd models, and other work from Ambleside, but I fear I have already trespassed too much on the limited space of our Magazine. I will only add that the whole was most refreshing and inspiring, and though it means perhaps real inconveniences to many of us to get up to town at the time of year when the Conference is held, I should like to say that, for us who live so much in the country, it is an annual opportunity for "rubbing up" and gaining fresh inspiration and ideas, which we should do well to use whenever possible, making real effort to be present.

C. F. Barnett.

NATURE NOTES.

A few students have sent flower lists and nature notes for comparison. Next time I shall hope to get more. I do not see why the competition for the record flower list should not be as keen as in Ambleside days. Miss Strachan sends a capital list from Norfolk. She has Comfrey and Ivy-leaved Toadflax among Ambleside friends which do not seem to favour this county (Surrey). She has also among her flowers both alternate and opposite-leaved Golden Saxifrage. Miss Tetley sends an account of an evidently fascinating "corner of Scotland," which I am sorry not to be able to publish. In and near the Nith valley she has found Globe Flowers, Sundew, Butterwort, and the Rock Rose among more widely distributed plants. She describes a country of Bracken and Heather, bubbling rocky burns, deep valleys, and tiny villages each with its kirk, its "curling pond," and its "manse"—all complete in its primitive simplicity. Surrey seems to patronise Broom and Petty Whin, which is like a small plant